

# **DIVISION for the VISUALLY IMPAIRED CELEBRATES 99<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**



*Meghan Heavelow of the Holloway Hideaway Café lights candles on the 99th Birthday cake as from left Bill McCaffrey, Wayne Marsh, Gary Pizzolo, Bob Goodhart and Secretary Vince Meconi look on.*

## **Multiple Events Kick-Off Countdown to Centennial**

The Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) started the countdown to its centennial with a 99th Birthday party on Friday, April 4th at 12 noon in the Holloway Hideaway Café on the grounds of the Health and Social Services Campus 1901 N. Dupont Highway in New Castle.

A concurrent celebration took place at the agency's Milford State Service Center Annex, 13 SW Front Street, Milford.

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## TWO EVENTS JUNE 26<sup>TH</sup>

Members of the Delaware General Assembly received a loaf of carrot cake in appreciation of their ongoing support of the agency on one of the last days of the legislative session on June 26th. Council Chair Margaret McBride, with the support of Council member Jack Turner, delivered the cakes and thanks to legislators and several senior administration figures including Governor Ruth Ann Minner and Lt. Governor John Carney. In addition, recipients were asked to: **“Hold the Date”** for the Division’s planned Centennial Gala, May 1, 2009 at the Hotel DuPont in Wilmington.



*Pictured from left, Senator Patricia Blevins, Margaret Mc Bride, Jack Turner and Lt. Governor John Carney.*

A number of DVI, and Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB) staff were in attendance for the Blue Rocks game at the first public



*Delaware Industries for the Blind employee Pat White prepares to throw out the first pitch at the June 26, 2008 Blue Rocks game with the Salem Avalanche.*

centennial event Thursday, June 26. Hundreds of Blue Rocks fans stopped at the DVI booth and took numerous Centennial Items including, bag clips, magnifiers, eye glass cleaners, tape measures and brochures.

## **DART Community Service Award**

On Tuesday, April 29, 2008, Orientation and Mobility Specialist Darlene Cole was the proud recipient of the first-ever public service award given by the Delaware Area Regional Transit Corporation (DART). The following are the remarks of Delaware Transportation Secretary Carolann Wicks as she presented the award:



***Darlene Cole with her DART Community Service Award.***

“Darlene has worked with the Division for the Visually Impaired for over 30 years, the last 18 years as a certified orientation and mobility specialist. Darlene has an undergraduate degree in education and graduated from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1992 with a Master’s degree in Low Vision and Orientation and Mobility. Darlene is a member of EDTAC (Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee), WILMAPCO, Governor’s Council on Walkability and Pedestrian Safety, and the Independent Living Advisory Committee.

Darlene is responsible for assessing and teaching travel skills to visually impaired and blind consumers of all ages. Her focus is to teach consumers to travel safely within their homes. The training frequently includes learning how to ride a bus and crossing streets.

Darlene has long been an advocate for individuals to utilize DART’s fixed route system. Darlene has also provided multiple training sessions to DART staff and operators to help them better understand the challenges faced by their customers.

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***Ken Sutton***

## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

On Tuesday June 17, 2008 DVI held its employee recognition day at the Dockside Harbor and Marina in Bear. Winner of the semi-annual employee of the year was Ken Sutton, Vocational

Rehabilitation Program Specialist. Ken was nominated by numerous DVI staff for his performance in a large number of areas. Specifically, Ken was cited for assuming the day to day management of the VR unit in addition to handling his role as training administrator for the agency. He helped with job coaching and career development for many of the VR staff, always being approachable and with a good sense of humor. In addition Ken volunteered his time to help in the community, by using vacation time to assist in the construction of a new home in the city of Wilmington as part of the Extreme Makeover Home Edition television program.

Other awards included overall Employee of the Year to Education Unit Supervisor Charlene Dolgos (see the Winter 2008 DVI Views). In addition, special Director's Awards were presented to Lou Cicamore, Account Technician in the Fiscal Unit for his "going the extra mile" by assuming ad hoc duties as facility



***Lou Cicamore***



liaison in handling special tasks resulted in building upgrades and better working conditions for staff in the Biggs building.



***Recognition Team***

A Director's Award was also presented to the Employee Award recognition Team: (from left) Chair Joan Markow, Elisha Jenkins, Holly Jackson, Jean May, Stacey Bragg and Kathie Oberholzer for all their efforts in coordinating the recognition day and soliciting and selecting award winners. Director Cynthia Lovell is on the right.

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## **DART Community Service Award**

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We honor Darlene today for her efforts in providing people with disabilities independence and greater flexibility in meeting their travel needs through public transit.”



*Amber Tamosaitis*

## Focus on a Consumer: Amber Tamosaitis

Amber, a 24 year old Newark resident with **septo optic dysplasia (SOD)** first had contact with agency as a toddler. SOD is characterized by an underdeveloped optic nerve and by nystagmus, a rapid, involuntary to-and-fro movement of the eyes. In the

intervening years, Amber has been involved with numerous staff, and she mentioned eight by name unprompted.

She was visited by DVI employee Darlene Cole when she was in day care. Amber continued her relationship with DVI as an elementary student at the Dunbar school in the Laurel school district. She remembers how Kathy Williams and Beth Angelini of the Education unit helped her with disclosing to her fellow students that she had an eye disorder. “I credit them with getting me through elementary school”, said Amber.

The disclosure was extremely helpful because of the support and understanding she received from her fellow students.

A life changing event for Amber happened in 10th grade when she signed up to take a Japanese course at her school in Delmar. She found a real affinity for the language and, in her junior year of high school, applied and was selected to be part of a 2 week student exchange. She felt she really had obstacles to overcome when it became evident during the interview process that those in charge were concerned about sending a visually impaired student abroad. With the behind-the-scenes support of her mother, Amber was able

to convince the interviewers that she could handle the trip. She had an outstanding experience in Japan, attending school and living with her host family.

On a trip to downtown Tokyo, Amber and a group of other exchange students became lost looking for a bookstore. Amber, being the student who had best mastered the language, was able to find directions and get the group back on track. This experience has stayed with her to this day: "I was the 'blind girl' leading the pack". It showed her that although she had a disability there were ways around it if she used the skills and abilities that she had developed.

Amber enrolled at the University of Delaware and progressed through a series of majors: French education, several languages and East Asian Studies. During her junior year another opportunity arose for her to travel to Japan when she applied for a Norton Ikeda scholarship for an 11 month session.

Again she faced a rigorous application process with pointed questions concerning her visual disability. Amber was honest in outlining her limitations, but was able to convince the interviewing panel that she could handle the challenge. Looking back on her experience, Amber acknowledges that it was hard being away from home for such a long time. She feels the experience of being an American in the midst of a large group of foreign exchange students was an invaluable learning experience. In addition, it gave her an experience in living on her own in an independent situation.

In the fall of 2007 Amber was hired as a long-term substitute Japanese teacher at Middletown High School (where she had been a student in 9th grade). To Amber it was a surreal experience teaching in a school where not too many years before she had been a student. It led to problems for her pupils in the beginning, because she was so young they treated her as a student instead of

teacher. She took the advice of a fellow teacher and disclosed to the class that she was visually disabled. The whole issue of disclosure has played a large role in Amber's life. She admits to apprehension about disclosing her vision problem, thinking that she will be seen as a liability. For instance she believes that as a teacher parents are afraid she can't watch over their children in the same capacity as a sighted person. Disclosure also affects personal relationships according to Amber, "Once you disclose your disability, the other person feels like they have to take care of you and the nature of that friendship becomes very uncomfortable".

Amber was pleased to learn recently that she has been hired by the school district as a full time instructor for the fall of 2008. She has decided that she wants to make teaching her career and help to grow the Japanese program at Middletown.

Eventually she would like to complete a Masters degree in psychology and do research psychology with people with disabilities. She sees herself doing both scientific and fiction writing. As for personal interests and hobbies, Amber enjoys judo, drawing, swimming, chess and GO (a Japanese board game).

Amber has concrete advice she would give to others with visual impairment or any other disability: it is important not to stagnate. It becomes easy to become sheltered at home, where you lose your energy. Networking between consumers is very helpful as is peer counseling. Amber gives credit to the Division for helping her over the years and being there at critical times, whether it was the Education unit, Orientation and Mobility, Vocational Rehabilitation or Independent Living Services, "DVI is a good set-up, very supportive, they care about what they are doing".





## **Award — Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB)**

The USDA, Food Safety Inspection Service, has recognized DIB as an “Abilityone Award Winner”. On June 25th, at a special ceremony at the USDA offices in Washington, D.C., a plaque was presented to DIB representatives LaKeesha Briscoe and Evelyn Haley by USDA Secretary Ed Schafer. DIB was cited as, “...a very responsive organization, and their employees and staff worked hard to provide the highest quality products available”.

## **New Products**

DIB is presently marketing a new line of Braille and Recycled plaques as well as a new Gift Basket line. More information is available by reviewing DIB’s web site: [www.promoplace.com/dib](http://www.promoplace.com/dib)

## **Wilmington Blind Bowling League**

**Free Try-Out in August**  
**On a Saturday 2:00-4:30**

**Bowlerama**  
**3031 New Castle Avenue**  
**New Castle, DE 19720**

**To try out, or for more information**  
**on future dates contact Leah Hawes**  
**(302) 255-9987**

**(Must be 18 years of age)**



## ..... ADVOCATES CORNER .....



***Roger Levy, Chairman, State Use Law Commission***

### ***State Use Law Commission By Roger Levy Esq., Chairman***

TITLE 16 of the Delaware Code defines the State Use Law and established the Commission with the goal of encouraging and assisting blind and other severely handicapped individuals to achieve maximum personal independence through useful and productive gainful employment by

assuring an expanded and constant market for their products and services. The Commission is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor for four year terms as follows:

#### **From the private sector:**

- a person with business experience in production,
- a person skilled in marketing,
- a person experienced in industrial purchasing,
- a person experienced in industrial engineering,
- a person experienced in sales,
- a person experienced in accounting,
- a person experienced in the field of advertising;

#### **From state government:**

- the Director of Government Support Services or representative
- the Secretary of Finance or representative

- ex officio, the Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired
- a representative from the Delaware Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

If any agency of this State intends to procure a product or service on the procurement list, that agency shall in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Commission procure such product or service at the price established by the Commission from the Delaware Industries for the Blind and from qualified rehabilitation facilities. If the product or service is available within the period required by that agency, such procurement shall be mandatory.

The Commission reviews the foregoing for the purpose of establishing a “set-aside” i.e. taking it out of the private sector and awarding said product for service to an above named provider.

The primary “Set-Aside” contracts that already exist are:

- Engraving and Promotional Products
- Various Janitorial Contracts
- Temporary Service Contract
- Remanufactured Toner Cartridge Contract
- Rubber Stamp Contract
- Document Mail Preparation Services (new)
- Electronics Recycling (new)

In total, these contracts resulted in employment for over 300 blind and disabled Delawareans in Fiscal Year 2007.

## ADVOCATES CORNER

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During the past fiscal year, two new “set-asides” identified above were approved; “Document Mail Preparation Services” and “Electronics Recycling”. These new additions should enable additional disabled Delawareans to obtain employment.

In the coming year, the Commission hopes to identify new opportunities to provide products and/or services to the State and thereby employ even more disabled Delawareans. It is hoped this will be accomplished via partnership with other agencies.

It is my goal that every disabled Delawarean who wishes, has the opportunity to engage in productive employment. Fortunately, I am joined by a caring and dedicated Commission who are committed to this goal.

## News from Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB)

DIB’s new web site for **US Geological Survey** was activated in March and is now up and running. DIB has a contract with USGS to provide all their employees with customized clothing. With the new web site any USGS employee can access DIB on the USGS home page and order directly from the site. We are pleased that during the first two months DIB has received approximately 80 orders and we expect 600 to 1000 orders over the next year.







## **BlindPoet's Corner:** **ONE VOICE**

**By Derek M.A. Alexander**

One Voice...  
Goes unheard,  
In the darkness  
Of the night.  
One Voice...  
From one person,  
Stays hidden,  
From the light.  
One Voice...  
Is barely audible,  
Like a whisper,  
In a crowd.  
One Voice...  
Simply fades away,  
Even though  
It's fairly loud.

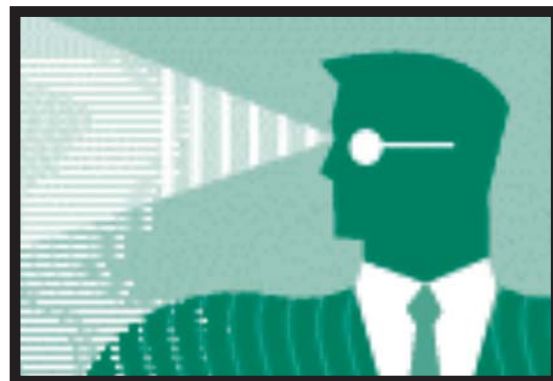
They soon realized,  
That if they'd speak together,  
They'd create a mighty noise,  
That would last forever.  
One Mind,  
One Heart,  
One Soul,  
One Spirit,  
That would echo  
    throughout the universe,  
And everyone would hear it.  
They cleared their throats,  
And made the choice,  
To harmonize,  
And they became  
ONE VOICE.

# FOCUS on an Eye Disorder: CVI

*[Editor's Note: This article ©2004, American Printing House for the Blind, Inc., used by permission.]*

## What is CVI?

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a neurological visual disorder. It is the fastest growing visual impairment diagnosis today.



## Definition for Medical Purposes:

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) may be defined as bilaterally diminished visual acuity caused by damage to the occipital lobes and or to the geniculostriate visual pathway. CVI is almost invariably associated with an inefficient, disturbed visual sense because of the widespread brain disturbance.

## Definition for Educational Purposes:

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a neurological disorder, which results in unique visual responses to people, educational materials, and to the environment. When students with these visual/behavioral characteristics are shown to have loss of acuity or judged by their performance to be visually impaired, they are considered to have CVI.

## History

Visual impairment was defined in the past by loss of acuity (how far we see) and also by the severity of visual field loss (blind area). This definition was originally designed for characterizing visually impaired adults who required social assistance and not for children with visual impairment caused by various eye conditions. Even though it did not accurately represent visual abilities, the definition was widely accepted, but it adversely influenced our thinking about visual impairment. Services were developed

worldwide for only those people with visual problems fitting this definition while others with obvious visual difficulties who required intervention were excluded.

During the last several decades, our understanding of vision has markedly improved. It is now realized that vision is not a single sense but a combination of complex senses which have evolved over millions of years. Almost the entire brain is involved in the process of seeing. In different locations there are specialized areas for distance vision, recognition of faces, objects, colors, contrast, and movement. There are also areas of the brain that coordinate visually-directed movements, and process visual information to achieve perceptions of directionality and depth. CVI is caused by widespread damage to the brain, which affects most of the specialized visual centers, resulting in a damaged, inefficient visual sense. When only a small visual area is affected, it can result in a specific visual disorder, but not in CVI.

Because in the past everyone who was considered to be visually impaired had to have reduced or absent visual acuity, the medical definition of CVI also emphasized loss of ability to see in the distance (reduced acuity). It was hoped that once the correct diagnosis was made, children with CVI would be appropriately managed by a variety of professionals, including educators.

The medical definition of CVI is not well understood by non-medical professionals. While acuity testing is difficult in the young and disabled for physicians, it is even more difficult for teachers. Also, there are many children with visual problems similar to CVI, except they have normal acuity. This visual condition is called "cortical visual dysfunction" (CVD). The educational management of children with CVI and CVD is similar. It is now known that with time the visual acuity of children with CVI tends to improve.

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# FOCUS on an Eye Disorder: CVI

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Therefore the diagnosis of CVI could change to CVD over time. Both groups require remedial education, which necessitates an increased number of specialized teachers. Based on the above discussion, it is clear that there is a need for an educational definition of CVI and CVD, which addresses the needs of these children.

## **CVI is suspected by:**

- a normal or close to normal eye examination;
- a medical history which includes neurological problems; and
- the presence of unique visual/behavioral characteristics.

## **Four major causes of CVI:**

- Asphyxia
- Brain maldevelopment
- Head injury
- Infection

## **Unique visual/behavioral characteristics of CVI:**

- Normal or minimally abnormal eye exam (CVI may co-exist with optic nerve atrophy, hypoplasia or dysplasia and ROP.)
- Difficulty with visual novelty (The individual prefers to look at old objects, not new, and lacks visual curiosity.)
- Visually attends in near space only
- Difficulties with visual complexity/crowding (Individual performs best when one sensory input is presented at a time, when the surrounding environment lacks clutter, and the object being presented is simple.)
- Non-purposeful gaze/light gazing behaviors
- Distinct color preference (Preferences are predominantly red and yellow, but could be any color.)



- Visual field deficits (It is not so much the severity of the field loss, but where the field loss is located.)
- Visual latency (The individual's visual responses are slow, often delayed.)
- Attraction to movement, especially rapid movements.
- Absent or atypical visual reflexive responses (The individual fails to blink at threatening motions.)
- Atypical visual motor behaviors (Look and touch occur as separate functions, e.g., child looks, turns head away from item, then reaches for it.)
- Inefficient, highly variable visual sense

## **DVI CELEBRATES 99<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**

*continued from cover*

Health and Social Services Secretary Vince Meconi, outlined the purposes of the Centennial Celebration as follows:

- To recognize the history and celebrate the accomplishments of the agency.
- To raise the visibility and public awareness of the agency, its clients and mission.
- To educate the public about the major causes of blindness and vision-related disabilities.

Following the brief program, attendees viewed a display with historical highlights of the agency and were treated to birthday cake.


The Division is very grateful to the Blind Vendors Committee and the Business Enterprise Program for their generous support in sponsoring the simultaneous birthday parties in New Castle and Milford.


# EVENTS

*The DVI Logo Denotes  
Centennial Activities*




## AUGUST


- 1-3** Teen Weekend, Landis Lodge Wilmington. 
- 21** 3:30 p.m. State Use Law Commission, Biggs Building, DVI Conference Room, 1901 N. DuPont Highway and via video conference at Government Support Services Building, 100 Enterprise Place, Suite 4 Dover.

- 19** 3:30 p.m., State Use Law Commission, Biggs Building, DVI Conference Room, 1901 N. DuPont Highway and via video conference at Government Support Services Building, 100 Enterprise Place, Suite 4 Dover.
- 20** 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m., Family Fun Day, Oak Orchard Boys and Girls Club 

## SEPTEMBER

- 12** 11:00 a.m. Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind, 200 S. DuPont Boulevard, Suite 101, Smyrna, DE 19977.
- 18** 10:00- 5:00 p.m. Newark Community Day, University of Delaware Green. 
- 18** 12 Noon, State Rehabilitation Council, Buena Vista Conference Center, 661 S. DuPont Highway, New Castle.

## OCTOBER

- 3** 11:00 a.m., Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind, 200 S. DuPont Boulevard, Suite 101, Smyrna, DE 19977.
- 15** White Cane Day- Statewide. 
- 16** 3:30 p.m., State Use Law Commission, Biggs Building, DVI Conference Room, 1901 N. DuPont Highway and via video conference at Government

Support Services Building,  
100 Enterprise Place,  
Suite 4 Dover.

- 20** Make A Difference Day-  
Projects to help  
Blind/Visually Impaired  
Delawareans.



## **NOVEMBER**

- 7** 11:00 a.m. Governor's  
Advisory Council on the  
Blind, 200 S. DuPont  
Boulevard, Suite 101,  
Smyrna, DE 19977.
- 20** 3:30 p.m., State Use  
Law Commission, Biggs  
Building, DVI Conference  
Room, 1901 N. DuPont  
Highway and via video  
conference at Government  
Support Services Building,  
100 Enterprise Place,  
Suite 4 Dover.

## **DECEMBER**

- 12** 11:00 a.m. Governor's  
Advisory Council on the  
Blind, 200 S. DuPont  
Boulevard, Suite 101,  
Smyrna, DE 19977.
- 18** 3:30 p.m., State Use  
Law Commission, Biggs  
Building, DVI Conference  
Room, 1901 N. DuPont  
Highway and via video  
conference at Government  
Support Services Building,  
100 Enterprise Place,  
Suite 4 Dover.
- 18** 12 Noon, State Rehabilitation  
Council, Buena Vista  
Conference Center, 661 S.  
DuPont Highway, New Castle.

*Please note these dates are subject to change.*

*Check the DVI website: **[www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dvil/index.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dvil/index.html)**  
or call **302-255-9800** to confirm*

# **Extra, Extra, Extra: Have You Heard?**

## **HOLD THE DATE!**

On Friday May 1st, 2009 DVI will hold its Centennial Gala in the Gold Ballroom of the Hotel DuPont in Wilmington. This exciting evening will feature entertainment, awards and more. Look for more information in upcoming DVI Views Newsletters for how to register.



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### *DVI VIEWS*

Division for the Visually Impaired, Delaware Health and Social Services

**Cynthia Lovell**, Director **Bob Goodhart**, Deputy Director

**Debra Simpson, Elisha Jenkins, Jack Holloway, Tanya Nicole Servis**, Editorial Staff

<http://www.state.de.us/dhss/dvi/index.html>

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DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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New Castle, DE 19720-1199

**FREE  
MATTER  
F/T  
BLIND**